

Amherst Cultural Council
Accepted Minutes
Monday, January 9, 2012
Jones Library, Amherst Room

The meeting called to order by: Ann Woodbridge, Chair.

Present: Ann Woodbridge (Chair), Sandra Mullin, Ruth Rootberg, (Secretary, Co-Treasurer), **Honoré** David, Arnold Friedmann, Ellen Kosmer, Joan Temkin (left early), and Sondra Radosh, liaison (left early).

Absent: Laurie Nisonoff, Gretchen Fox.

Annual Reporting for the Website:

Ann has completed most of the necessary online annual reporting. The deadline is January 17, 2012. She just needs to **report on today's** meeting.

Mailing the Acceptances:

Ann has already been addressing envelopes for acceptance letters, so the process is underway. **Honoré** has volunteered to help Ann complete the stuffing and mailing.

Extensions or Contesting of Denials

Neither requests for extensions for FY2011, nor requests to reconsider denials for FY2012 have been received.

Approval of December 1, 2011 Minutes

Ruth noted Joan's name was listed as present and absent; she was absent. Minutes were approved as corrected, with further correction that December 1 was Thursday, not Wednesday.

Correction to earlier approved minutes:

Ruth reported that a clerical error in the October 26-27, 2011 minutes came to her attention as she reviewed the grants. In the following sentence: **"At present, we can grant \$19,307,** which represents \$18,250 from the MCC, \$806 unencumbered funds from FY2010, and **approximately \$195 left over in the administrative account."** the \$806 amount of unencumbered funds **should read \$861**. It was moved and approved to re-approve the minutes as corrected to read:

"At present, we can grant \$19,307, which represents \$18,250 from the MCC, \$861 unencumbered funds from FY2010, and approximately \$195 left over in the administrative account."

Financial report

Ruth reported she had been in contact with Holly Bowser from the Amherst Town offices. The \$196 we have been working with as part of the grant money from the administrative funds needs to be formally requested as part of the total we are withdrawing from the Interest bearing account.

This means that in addition to the \$1,943 we voted to move into the funding account on December 1, we must add \$196. Thus we will request from the town the sum of \$1,943 + \$196, which is a total request of \$2,139. To expedite this, the Council needed to approve this motion:

Ruth moved we add an additional \$196 to the amount we will grant, as described above. Approved.

Furthermore, the administrative funds, which have been reduced in the last few months as reimbursements have been paid out and is presently \$159.59, are available to us for the printing and mailing expenses of sending out the acceptance letters. If at any time we are in need of more administrative funds, we can request a draw down from the Interest-bearing account from Holly Bowser at Town Hall. It has been customary to make this request only once a year, but it can in fact be made more frequently.

Ann expressed her appreciation for Ruth's use of the Excel spreadsheet for showing the "running totals" as we went through the decision-making process; it helped with her job of finishing the website requirements.

Changing Local Guidelines:

Our attention turned to changing local guidelines. To assist us, Ann distributed three items: the full Local Cultural Council regulations and guidelines (revised July 2011); our local Cultural Council Guidelines as they currently exist on the website, and a collation of recent e-mails indicating the areas we want to discuss for changing local guidelines.

Our first consideration was to construct supplemental questions for School travel grants (formerly known as "PASS Grants"). Ann mentioned a conversation with Jennifer Lawless regarding revisions for local guidelines. We can request additional information by creating a supplemental application.

Discussion ensued. As the Council spends a lot of time gathering extra information, we would like to have the schools provide it from the start. Some concern was expressed whether teachers would not apply for grants if we made it too complicated to apply. It was noted that teachers need to be thinking about how special events relate to curriculum, and most teachers would want to make whatever enrichment experience more understandable to the students. **Therefore, it shouldn't be a hardship for them to explain this to us**, briefly. On the other hand, **we don't want to judge the value of the tie-in with the curriculum. A lot of performances will not fit exactly into the year-long curriculum for that grade. Teachers don't have the flexibility to create a new unit, because they are already restricted by standardized curriculum.**

New Supplemental Application for Field Trip Grants

The following criteria and questions were approved, subject to Ann and Ruth discovering the correct way to display the information via an on-line form or otherwise.

- 1) When considering multiple applications from the same school in any one grant cycle, the Amherst Cultural Council will not consider more than one event for any one student to participate.

- 2) Please list the exact number of students in each grade you wish to take for this field trip grant. For instance, if there are 3 classes of 3rd grade, let us know if each class will attend this event, and how many students are in each class. If both 3rd and 4th grade will attend, please list how many classes there are in each grade, and how many students are in each class, and let us know if each class from each grade will attend.
- 3) Travel expenditures (e.g., buses) will not be reimbursed.
- 4) Tickets for chaperones, other than one teacher per class who accompanies the group, will not be paid for.
- 5) The specific date of the performance/event should be stated, and if it is not available, information should be given explaining when the date will be set.
- 6) Please describe how you will integrate this field trip into classroom activities.

There was some discussion regarding paying for chaperones. In instances where the families are disadvantaged, should we try to pay for them? We decided no; we want to support the children, not the parents, and trust that parent organizations or individuals within the school will support as needed.

We also wondered how other local councils work with field trips. Ruth had understood through **the chair of another local council that we weren't supposed to** exchange information about policies or decisions with other councils. Arnold is going to follow up with Jennifer Lawless to see whether that's correct. **If possible, he would like to gather information to share with us.**

We discussed whether we want to set ourselves a limit right now; a ceiling of what percentage of the whole goes to field trip grants, but decided not to do that. Because of that decision, we are striking a line from the current local guidelines that reads: "Approximately one-fifth of our funding went to field trip grants in the last granting cycle."

Ruth will ask Jennifer Lawless how to put a supplemental form up on the website. Currently there is a line on the Amherst Cultural Council page (<http://www.mass-culture.org/Amherst#>) that states: **"Applications for field trips are accepted. (Formerly known as PASS applications)."**

The Council approved additional wording and editing to read:
"Applications for field trips (formerly known as PASS applications) are accepted and require the completion of the local supplemental application."

There will probably need to be an instruction for where to locate the application. Ruth will find out from Jennifer Lawless.

Revising Local Guidelines - capital expenditures:

Ann relayed information from Jennifer Lawless stating that some local councils were not

allowing any capital expenditure projects because the small amounts they would be able to give do not provide sufficient support for capital expense. After discussion, we decided we would still accept capital expenditure applications. Some of the rationale is that even a little **bit might help, even if it's just for an organization to say they received something from us, which can help them get funding from somewhere else. We don't need to feel we are making a substantial contribution.**

Re-organizing local guidelines online

Recognizing that the local guidelines are somewhat out of order, and that local criteria are mixed in with funding priorities, we agreed to re-arrange the order. Ruth will make the changes on the website, after Ann shows her how to do it.

Current guideline numbers 9, 11 & 12 which each start with "Priority" will come under **Funding Priorities.** Criteria #1-8 should come next. Additional criteria will show what we have added as a local council, currently numbered #10, 13, 14, 15, and 16.

In addition, we are adding one new local guideline as follows:

"At events where no admission is charged, we encourage the applicant to suggest free-will donations to supplement whatever other funding you receive."

Request to MCC to revise a question

We next took up a concern that we don't know enough about the length of experience for some applicants, especially if it's a new artist/group or an organization applying for the first time. The "question" on the first page of the regular grant application states: "The applicant, or person leading the project/program, has been engaged in the kind of activity for which funds are requested for at least one year."

Currently the applicant only checks the box, to mean "yes." We would like to know more, at least - for how many years. Ruth will ask Jennifer Lawless of the MCC, telling her it's a question that kept coming up for us; would the MCC consider making the question more specific. They may say no, and then we would just let it go.

The wish for more information

We note that many times we would like to know more about the group or project, but the online form cuts off explanation when a certain limit of words/characters is reached. We are reluctant to ask for more information, as we want to avoid unlimited streams of text which would increase our workload. Some organizations to provide supplemental information by way of programs, brochures, and recordings of performance.

Incomplete or un-collated sets of applications

Ann encourages us to not accept applications unless they have been completed and collated correctly (as is stated in the local guidelines). It is not our job, and we should just hand back the packet with a request for it to be corrected before the deadline. This task (i.e., receiving applications, accepting them as is or turning them back for completion) would go to our new Co-Chairs, Ellen and/or Honoré.

Miscellaneous

Ann will cancel Jan 10 meeting that was scheduled in case we needed to re-schedule due to snow.

Thanks to Ann

While the Council was fully assembled, Arnold moved to thank Ann Woodbridge officially for the wonderful job she has done as Chair; the motion was approved unanimously and accompanied by enthusiastic applause.

Navigating the next changes before these Minutes are approved

Ruth moved that the Council authorize Ann & Ruth to finalize any wording or procedures needed to update local guidelines after consulting with Jenifer Lawless of MCC. Approved.

Officers

As Ann will be resigning following the mailing of the approval letters, she asked us to complete our roster of officers. We also have the unusual situation where Gretchen has handled reimbursements, but does not wish to hold any fiduciary-related title. Honoré is handling reimbursements this winter while Gretchen is out of town, and will share the title of Co-Treasurer with Ruth (as well as sharing the Chair role with Ellen).

Co-Chair: Honoré David

Co-Chair: Ellen Kosmer

Secretary: Ruth Rootberg

Co-Treasurer: Honoré David

Co-Treasurer: Ruth Rootberg

Ruth requested **Honoré** and Ellen to establish areas of responsibility so communication will proceed smoothly. Ann will announce when she officially resigns. Laurie will also resign soon. We will then be reduced to seven members and **don't require more, but** we always need five for a quorum. To assure smooth running of meetings, it would be helpful to recruit a couple more members. Honoré and Ellen will discuss candidates they would like to **approach, with a special eye to someone who could take over the Treasurer's** responsibilities.

Ruth will upload minutes to Town Website after Ann informs her that the acceptance letters have been mailed (with some delay so the letters will be received first)..

With no further business, the meeting adjourned 3:30pm. The next meeting will be in the fall as the FY2013 cycle gets underway.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Rootberg